

Joe Cameron

The Extended Mall

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The Nation's Capital in Photographs, 1976

The exhibition is supported by grants from the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, Washington, D. C.; the Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation, Washington, D. C.; and the National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, D. C., a Federal agency.

The Nation's Capital in Photographs, 1976

Joe Cameron

The Corcoran Gallery of Art
Washington, D. C.

December 11, 1976—February 20, 1977

The Nation's Capital in Photographs, 1976 is an unprecedented Bicentennial project originated by The Corcoran Gallery of Art. Eight eminent American photographers have been invited to spend extended periods—at least a month—in Washington, D. C. during 1975-1976 to photograph the city, its environs and people, as each was guided by his own vision. Thus we hoped to achieve a diversified documentation of a place and time. A selection of four prints by each artist is to be earmarked for exhibition at the Corcoran in the Tricentennial year 2076.

The participating artists, each shown separately, two at a time in four stages throughout the year 1976, are LEWIS BALTZ, San Francisco; JOE CAMERON, Washington, D. C.; ROBERT CUMMING, Los Angeles; ROY DECARAVA, New York City; LEE FRIEDLANDER, New City, New York; JOHN GOSSAGE, Washington, D. C.; JAN GROOVER, New York City; and ANTHONY HERMANDEZ, Los Angeles.

The artists were selected by Chief Curator Jane Livingston and Assistant Curator Frances Fralin. As organizers of this series of exhibitions they have been responsible for the complete task of scheduling and working with the artists at every stage of the project's long development, and for producing the eight catalogues. I wish to express my special appreciation to them and to each of the eight artists for their unstinting cooperation.

The exhibition is supported by grants from the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, Washington, D. C.; the Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation, Washington, D. C.; and the National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, D. C., a Federal agency.

Roy Slade, *Director*

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Joe Cameron is one of two resident D.C. photographers in this series. Since he lives here year round, it was slightly puzzling for us at the outset of this eighteen month project to receive Cameron's special request that we schedule his show at the end of the program. Now that we are presented with the twenty-seven photographs he made, mostly in the Summer of 1976, in the area of the Washington Mall, it is strikingly clear why the artist works over a long period of time and with plenty of psychological latitude. For each photograph is a kind of distillation, an almost *crafted* image, wrested from Cameron's surroundings through a process of communion with his own unconscious.

Cameron's photographs here are I think close in spirit to Japanese microcosmic art forms. They have a kind of poignant, crystalline quality—a blend of calculatedly “random-seeming” arrangements and privately formulated symmetries. This symmetric character actually is of utmost importance. Though Cameron is extremely reluctant to talk about the “devices” or “intentions” behind what he photographs, it is interesting to know that he considers the works' erotic content to be extremely palpable; that in this series he intentionally included some bit or remnant of plant matter in each image; that he is struck by the notion of the “spaces between events.”

Cameron himself noted the ascendant irony of going, in his quest for solitude in his life and work, to the Washington Mall in the Bicentennial summer. Despite what he calls the “self-importance” of the Mall, the awareness one has there of the portentousness of events in the present and throughout recent history, Cameron found there his needed air of solitude. The Mall has a personal significance to him which comes from having known it for a lifetime. He mentioned having, as a child, had a pungently and enduringly mem-

orable experience of awakening in the back seat of his parents' automobile as they passed the Mall on Independence Avenue at night returning from a visit to Ohio. The feeling he had of *place*, of peace and clarity and vividness, has demonstrably found its way into this work.

After considering the various contributions of Lewis Baltz, Robert Cumming, Roy DeCarava, Lee Friedlander, John Gossage, Jan Groover and Anthony Hernandez in this “Washington '76” series of commissioned exhibitions, it seemed impossible to imagine yet a different vision of the city or, more than this, an entirely separate approach to making photographs. There has been such vast diversity, and elements in the work of each of the other seven artists seemed so exhaustively to touch upon the major conventions of straight camera work as it has evolved until the present time. Yet here is another style, a fresh look. Cameron's photographs, if they can be said to belong to a tradition, fall within a rather rarefied category: a meditative aura occurs here, formally abstract yet certainly not calling to mind an effete sensibility. The work is acutely internalized—indeed to the point at which it is distasteful to invoke other names in comparison. Cameron has given us a group of images which make us see not only his own way of seeing but the locales he presents in an altered light.

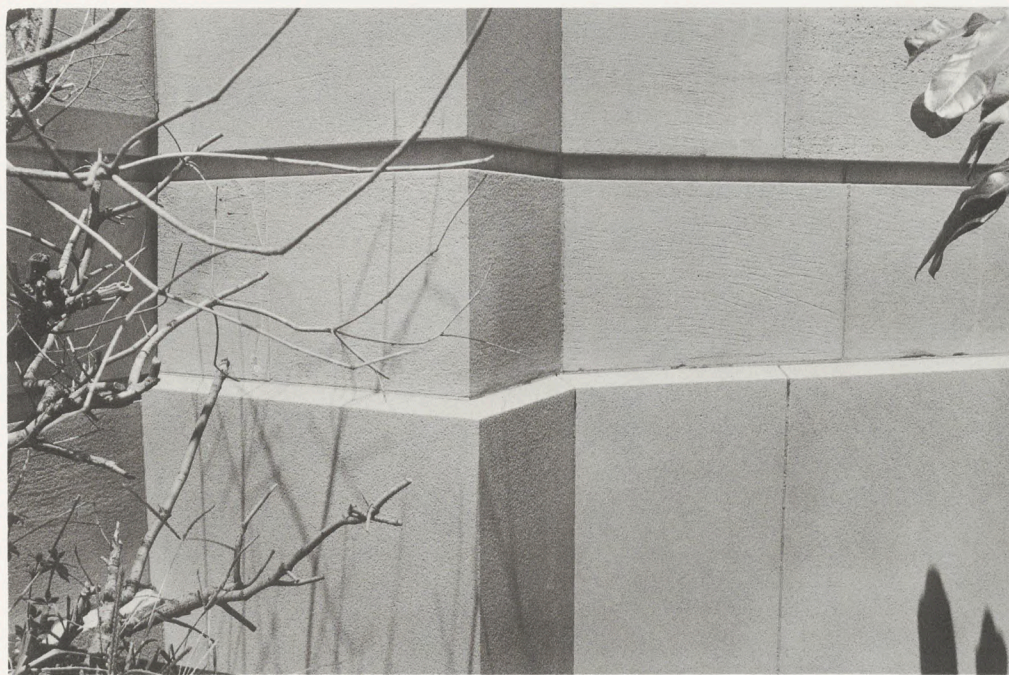
Jane Livingston

I began this project with no specific idea in mind, but simply went where it felt best to shoot. Again and again I found myself returning to an area bordered by Constitution Avenue, Independence Avenue, the grounds of the Capitol Building and those of the Lincoln Memorial: or simply, "The Mall" as extended to the Potomac River. Eventually, I came to accept these reference points as boundaries within which I would photograph until the work was completed.

My reasons for such a commitment are numerous, but most significant of all was the discovery of this area's geographic position within the city. The original perimeter of the nation's capital was drawn to form a perfect square with its four corners pointing north, south, east and west. The Mall lies central to Washington and adjacent to its east/west axis line. For many of us, east and west are simple points on a compass which provide a sense of direction. To the Plains Indians they connote such specific metaphor as "illumination" and "introspection." East and west can also be seen as the "places" of sunrise and sunset.

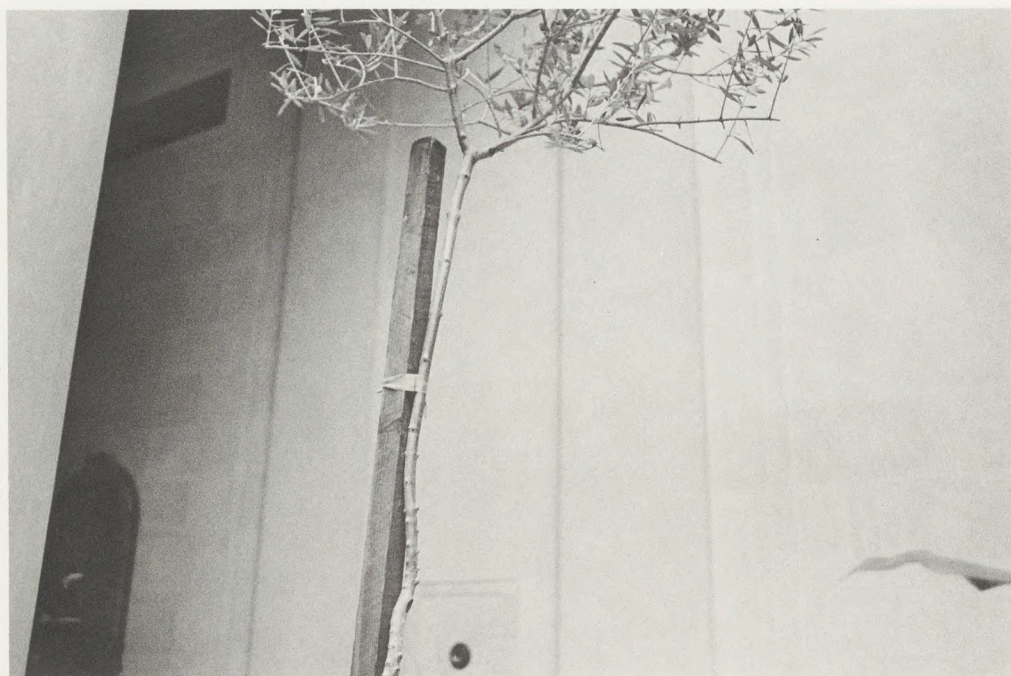
Considering in addition its implicit social-historical overtones, the Mall becomes for me a "charged ground" and an important place to photograph.

Joe Cameron
Fall 1976









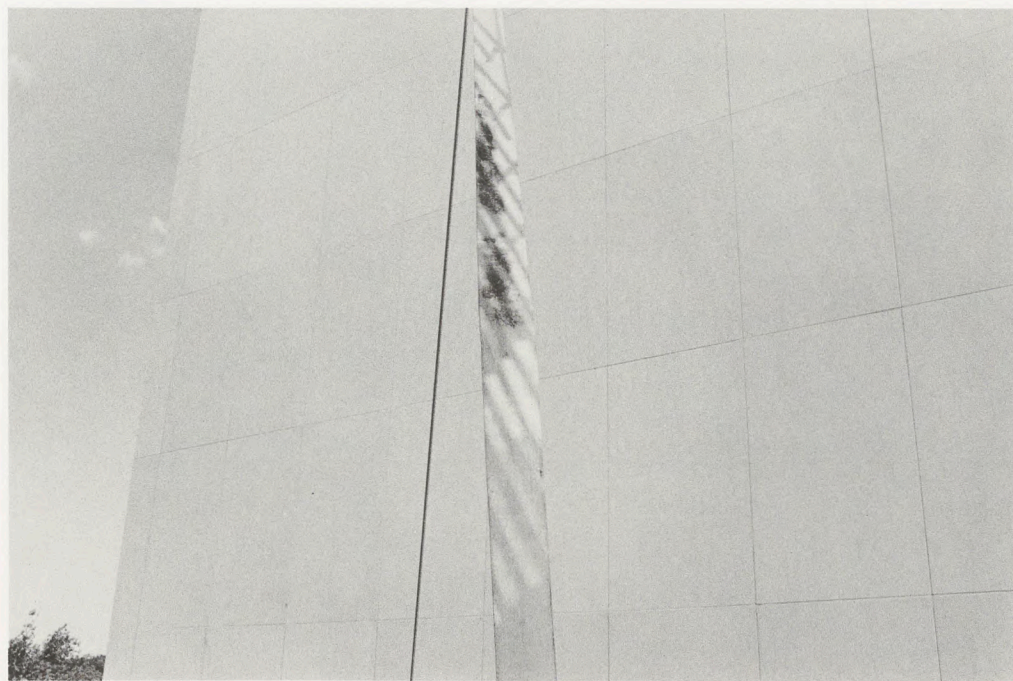




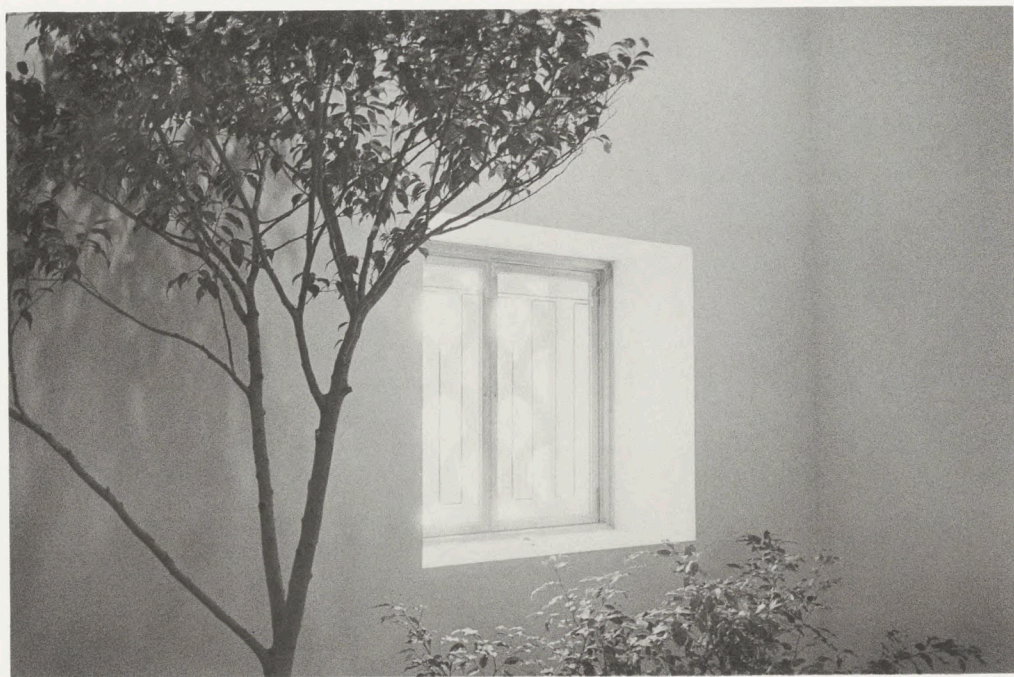


















Catalogue of the Exhibition

Untitled 1 through *Untitled 27*, inclusive. All images are 10" x 15" printed on 16" x 20" RC photographic paper, height preceding width.

Untitled 1 through *Untitled 15* are reproduced consecutively in the catalogue.



Photograph by Diann Kraft

Joe Cameron

Born Marysville, Ohio, 1939.

Studied painting with Richard Lahey, Corcoran School of Art, Washington, D. C., 1961.

B. A. Davis and Elkins College, Elkins, West Virginia, 1965.

Art teacher, Fairfax County Public Schools, Virginia, 1965-68.

Received a Washington Gallery of Modern Art Artist Fellowship Grant, 1968, renewed as Corcoran Workshop Program Grant with matching funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, 1970.

"Joe Cameron/John Gossage," two-person exhibition, Corcoran Gallery—Dupont Center, Washington, D. C., 1969.

"The Camera and the Human Facade," group exhibition, Smithsonian Institution, Museum of History and Technology, Washington, D. C., 1969.

"Photomedia U.S.A.," group exhibition, San Diego State College, San Diego, California, 1971.

Research Fellow, Division of Graphic Arts and Photography, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C., 1971.

Curated exhibition "Eleven Washington Photographers," Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. and Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, Maryland, 1971.

Began teaching Photography, Corcoran School of Art, Washington, D. C., 1971.

Two photographs published in *Camera*, Lucerne, Switzerland, June 1971.

"Contemporary Photography," group exhibition, Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1972.

M.F.A. Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, Maryland, 1972.

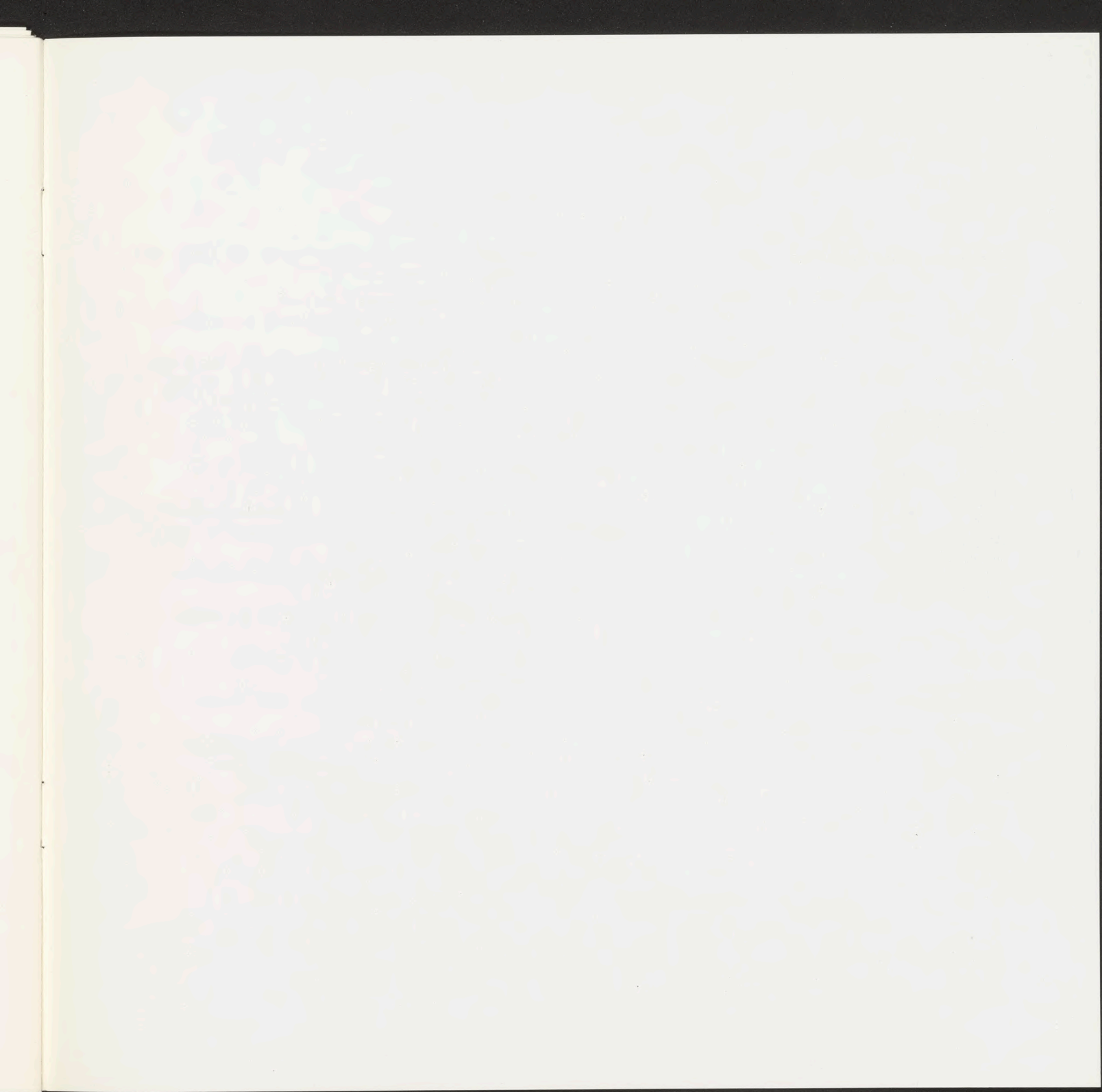
Traveling Group Exhibition, The Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, Maryland, 1973.

Individual exhibition, Jefferson Place Gallery, Washington, D. C., 1973.

Individual exhibition, The Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, Maryland, 1974.

Chairperson, Department of Photography, Corcoran School of Art, Washington, D. C., Fall 1975 to present.

Lives Washington, D. C.



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